

June 10, 2020

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****PRESS RELEASE****

Three Tenderloin Non-Profit Organizations - Hospitality House, Coalition on Homelessness, and Faithful Fools – Seek to Intervene in Lawsuit to Prevent Further Harm to Homeless Residents

SAN FRANCISCO — In the midst of a pandemic, Hastings College of the Law, along with four individual Plaintiffs and the Tenderloin Merchants and Property Association, filed a lawsuit against the City of San Francisco seeking to remove unhoused residents from the Tenderloin neighborhood. **Hospitality House, Coalition on Homelessness, and Faithful Fools**, along with twenty-five other homeless advocacy groups, urged the law school to pledge that it would protect the constitutional and human rights of unhoused Tenderloin residents during this lawsuit. The law school refused.

On June 9, Hospitality House, Coalition on Homelessness, and Faithful Fools filed a motion for intervention to request to become a party to *Hastings College of the Law et al v. City and County of San Francisco*. Each non-profit organization provides services to people experiencing homelessness in the Tenderloin. They seek to ensure that the interests of unhoused Tenderloin residents, whose lives and property will be directly affected by the outcome of the litigation, are represented in the litigation.

“It’s unbelievable that a law school is suing the City to undertake sweeps of homeless people during the worst health pandemic in 100 years.” said Jennifer Friedenbach, Executive Director of the Coalition on Homelessness. “Unhoused Tenderloin residents have no choice but to live outdoors, often with little more than a tent. Shelters are closed and the City is not providing homeless people with hotel rooms, even though thousands remain empty. Without any adequate plan for providing shelter, where are people to go?” asked Friedenbach.

Joe Wilson, Executive Director of Hospitality House, was similarly outraged. “Before becoming involved in this lawsuit, community groups reached out to the Dean and Chancellor of UC

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Hastings to see if he would pledge to protect the human rights of homeless persons. When he declined to do so, we knew we had to get involved.”

Hospitality House, the Coalition on Homelessness, and Faithful Fools and 25 other homeless advocacy groups and providers previously voiced the incredibly difficult barriers that individuals experiencing homelessness face while unsheltered.

“Unhoused people have rights. Many people are living with disabilities and right now, there are no options for them. We believe that without their voices and participation in this lawsuit, decisions will be made *for* them, but without their consent. That’s not what justice should look like in the City of St. Francis,” explained Wilson.

“Intervention is appropriate because unhoused people and the organizations that serve them will be directly affected by any settlement or ruling in the case,” says Attorney Lauren Hansen, from the Public Interest Law Project and lead counsel for Faithful Fools, the Coalition, and Hospitality House. “Any response to unsheltered homelessness in the Tenderloin must protect the constitutional and statutory rights of unhoused people. This includes ensuring the City’s homelessness programs and services are accessible to unhoused people with disabilities.”

Faithful Fools, located in the heart of the Tenderloin, also joined the motion for intervention. “Unhoused people are scared of this virus. They know that it hits poor people very hard. This lawsuit makes it look like we have to choose between housed and unhoused Tenderloin residents. That’s a false choice,” explained Sam Dennison, Co-Director of Faithful Fools. “What we have to do is protect the rights and health of people, whether they live on the streets or in an SRO or in an apartment. That’s something we can do if we have the will, but we can’t sacrifice the rights and health of one group for another.”

All three organizations are represented by nonprofit legal services organizations Public Interest Law Project and Disability Rights California. Coalition on Homelessness is also represented by Bay Area Legal Aid.

Since the pandemic hit, the number of tents used for survival and living in the Tenderloin has increased by 285%, bringing increased visibility to a longstanding problem. Community groups and unhoused residents in the Tenderloin have called for hotel rooms — instead of sweeping homeless people out of public space when they have nowhere to go.

Hospitality House is a non-profit shelter and service organization that serves thousands of low-income residents, both housed and unhoused, in the Tenderloin, Mid-Market, and Sixth Street Corridor neighborhoods through a variety of programs including a Shelter program, Self-Help Centers, and Employment Program.

Coalition on Homelessness organizes unhoused people and front-line service providers to create permanent solutions to homelessness while working to protect the human rights of those forced to remain on the streets.

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Faithful Fools is a non-profit organization that provides a variety of services for Tenderloin residents, including a weekly interfaith Bible study session, movie nights, and writing workshops. Faithful Fools also provides direct services by helping unhoused persons navigate the complex housing system as they seek to exit homelessness, assisting individuals living in low-income housing with grocery shopping, and accompaniment to medical appointments, and other services.

All three organizations are located in the Tenderloin District and employ individuals who are unhoused or were formerly homeless.

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